

Daily Press Briefing: Discussion on Iraq

Contents

May 28, 2013	2
February 12, 2013	4
Press Statement: February 9, 2013.....	7

May 28, 2013

Patrick Ventrell, Acting Deputy Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Iraq

Washington, DC

QUESTION: In the last couple days, there's been a real spike in violence and the country seems to be coming apart. Is the United States doing anything on the ground to mediate --

MR. VENTRELL: Okay.

QUESTION: -- other than condemnation? Can you share with us something that you are actually doing sort of urgently to meet the urgency of the situation?

MR. VENTRELL: Well, our Embassy is very engaged. The Vice President of the United States is very engaged.

Let me start, though, of course, with our strong condemnation. The United States strongly condemns the terrorist attacks in Baghdad yesterday, where numerous car bombs detonated, killing and injuring scores of innocent people. We are deeply concerned by the frequency and nature of recent attacks, including the bombing of a bus today in Baghdad and a truck bomb north of Baghdad as well today. So the targeting of innocent people in an effort to sow instability and division is reprehensible, and our condolences go out to the victims and their families.

U.S. officials in Baghdad and Washington are intensively engaged. We're in contact with a wide range of senior Iraqi leaders to urge calm and help resolve ongoing political and sectarian tensions. And the level of U.S. engagement is evidenced including by the Vice President's engagement, which you saw the readouts to late last week.

So our talks from the Embassy, they're focused on specific steps to avoid further violence and resolve key issues peacefully through dialogue and through the political process.

QUESTION: Why doesn't the United States -- I mean, there is a great deal of attention to the Syrian civil war, for instance. Conferences are being organized and so on, Friends of Syria, all that stuff, but Iraq, on the other hand, continues to bleed. And you are basically a very important ingredient of what is going on in Iraq. Why doesn't the United States, for instance, lead an effort to reconciliation, to bring the groups together?

MR. VENTRELL: Said, we're -- we remain committed to supporting Iraq's democratic system, and we urge Iraq leaders to continue to working toward a peaceful resolution, to work through

their system, to work through dialogue. And so we continue to work to help Iraq overcome the threat of terrorism and its internal issues. So this is something we're very actively engaged on and very focused on.

February 12, 2013

Victoria Nuland

Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing
Washington, DC
February 12, 2013

QUESTION: Can I ask about the attack on Camp Liberty at the weekend?

MS. NULAND: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I saw you put out a statement condemning the attack.

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: And I wondered if you had any update from the Iraqi authorities about who they might consider was behind it. And there's also been some calls, notably from Representative Ros-Lehtinen, for the residents who are in Camp Liberty to be moved back to Camp Ashraf, and I wondered what the United States position was on that.

MS. NULAND: Well, first let just reiterate what we said in our statement at the weekend – you got me speaking British here – over the weekend. The United States condemns in strongest terms the vicious and senseless terror attack that took place at Camp Hurriya which killed seven people and has injured dozens more. We offer our condolences to the family.

Our understanding is that the Government of Iraq has now undertaken to promptly investigate the attack. We call on the Iraqi Government to do so earnestly and to fully carry out this investigation and to take all appropriate measures to enhance the security of the camp, consistent with its commitments and obligations to the safety and security of the residents. The terrorists responsible for this attack must also be brought to justice.

The answer for the individuals at Hurriya is not to relocate back to Ashraf, in our view. The only peaceful and durable solution for these individuals is resettlement outside Iraq, and that should continue to be the focus of everybody involved in this effort. As you know, we are continuing to support the work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq and the UNHCR are undertaking to try to work on resettlement of these people.

QUESTION: How much progress is actually being made? Because it has been going on for quite some time now – in resettlement, sorry.

MS. NULAND: Yeah. I mean, I think there are a number of issues here. There are questions of working through the individual dossiers and matching those who are willing to be resettled with recipient countries. So that process is going on, and UNHCR is doing that work now. But there is

also the question of continuing to encourage those inhabitants of the camp that resettlement outside of Iraq is the best option, and that's a message we all need to continue to send.

QUESTION: Toria, are there not still some residents still at Camp Ashraf?

MS. NULAND: I need to check up on that. The last time I checked up into that we still had some 50 to 100 who had declined to move. But I'll check on that for you, Arshad.

Said.

QUESTION: Is it – just on this –

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- calls for people to go back to Liberty from wherever they come from, are those kind of calls helpful at all? This – I mean --

MS. NULAND: To go back to Ashraf, you mean?

QUESTION: Well, yeah, exactly. For an elected member – for a member of Congress – or for anyone in a position of some kind of authority to suggest that MEK people go back to a camp that you went to considerable lengths to get closed down, does that – is that helpful at all in terms of the – your policy and the idea of resettlement, which you're actively working on, even though you no longer have a point person?

MS. NULAND: Well, we do have point people; they're just inside the NEA Bureau and the Legal Bureau, rather than in a special office now. But I would simply say that we make the same point privately as I just made publicly to both Americans and Iraqis and international --

QUESTION: Yeah, but it seems to me that this is raising – it's going to – it makes it more difficult. The MEK leadership has been recalcitrant, to say the least. It took a lot of teeth pulling to get them out and --

MS. NULAND: Yeah.

QUESTION: Just for the record, as far as I know, they're still not out of Camp Ashraf.

QUESTION: Well, there's still that residual group, but for the majority of the residents, it took a lot of painstaking work to get that done. And it seems to me that for people now to be saying that they should go back, somehow Ashraf should be reopened, is just completely unhelpful to what you're trying to do in terms of resettlement.

MS. NULAND: Well, again, the point that I made here is the same point that we make in our private meetings with those who advocate for the MEK, that if they want to see them safe, if they want to see them have a better life, the answer is outside of Iraq.

Said.

QUESTION: How long --

MS. NULAND: Said.

QUESTION: On Camp Liberty, I mean when the site was chosen, everybody knew that it was within range of mortars from Sadr City, probably everybody knows the source of these mortars, without the benefits of the C-RAM that the Americans had there before. So why not resettlement, or in fact, why not urge the Europeans to take many of these residents -- I have spoken to them personally -- to go back? Some of them are European citizens -- to go back to their countries.

MS. NULAND: Well, this is precisely what UNHCR is working on, what we are working on with UNHCR, is to offer as much resettlement opportunity as possible, including in certain cases where there are ties to other countries as well.

QUESTION: Are any of them eligible for resettlement to the United States?

MS. NULAND: In principle, they could be. We are now in the process of evaluating some of the referrals that UNHCR has sent our way, and we're strongly, as I said, encouraging others to do the same. As UNHCR looks at these individual cases, they make recommendations to resettlement countries. We're looking at ours.

QUESTION: Have you accepted any?

MS. NULAND: We have not made any decisions yet, Arshad.

QUESTION: Do you think it would be easier for -- do you think it might help your argument that other countries should take some if you might take some?

MS. NULAND: Again, this is -- usually works best when there is burden sharing. We're looking at what we can do.

Press Statement: February 9, 2013

Press Statement

Victoria Nuland

Department Spokesperson, Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

February 9, 2013

The United States condemns in the strongest terms the vicious and senseless terrorist attack that took place this morning at Camp Hurriya killing 6 people and injuring dozens more. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims and hope for the swift recovery of those who were injured.

We understand the Government of Iraq has undertaken to promptly investigate the attack. We call on it to earnestly and fully carry out that investigation and to take all appropriate measures to enhance the security of the camp consistent with its commitment and obligation to the safety and security of the camp's residents. The terrorists responsible for this attack must be brought to justice.

We are consulting with the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on the circumstances surrounding this tragedy, and we remain committed to assisting the Government of Iraq and UNAMI in their efforts to implement the December 25, 2011 agreement.